Palmer draws on several wisdom traditions to postulate his own concept of spirituality. However, I find while his concepts are sound and interesting to read, he has as the basis of his premise that self-will is be sufficient to master the defects of character that separate one from an active relationship with God. The argument is that one must search fearlessly for evidence of God’s presence in one’s life. To do that, a moral inventory must be taken. This process will bring focus to one’s prejudice, bias, and selfish and self-centered motives. This in turn enables self-honesty, which then allows one to diligently search for other forms of over-reliance on self; fear, pride, resentment, ego, calamity, pomp, and worship of other things.

He suggests “riding the monster” all the way down to the depths of our conscience, exposing the severity of the character defects. I part with his ideology that these defects of character are “companions”; he fails to make clear the requirement of most wisdom traditions that surrender of defects of character to a Higher Power is the essential first step in the process. Human resources are finite; a Higher Power’s resources are infinite. One can’t fix a “you” problem with more “you”.

I am sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. I cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it is just that for many. What Palmer makes clear is that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. And he suggests we can avoid the deliberate manufacture of misery. I don’t follow his leap of logic that when trouble comes, we follow it to the depths of despair and wallow in it; trusting the experience will provide insight.

I do agree that one can cheerfully capitalize the daily struggle to surrender the defects of character that separate us from an active relationship with God as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence in our lives.

The notion of “community” is also a prevalent theme in this work. I do believe this is an important part of one’s spiritual life. However, it is not the basis for one’s spirituality. In my view, spiritual fitness in contingent upon daily maintenance that involves moral inventory, amends, and “right-sizing” self. The later the most important. Humility, that is the balance between self and Spirit, is essential to one’s spiritual fitness. Daily prayer and meditation is my suggestion for that important task. It is then I feel ready to attain mindfulness of my defects of character, and promptly surrender them to my Higher Power. Otherwise, my life is an exercise in self-will – often with disastrous results.

Consider driving on the freeway. Someone cuts you off, and you immediately act out of anger or fear. Perhaps you cut them off, display a gesture of insult, or simply surrender your life to this discourteous driver and for the rest of the day tell everyone you meets about the so-and-so who cut you off during your morning commute. Palmer would have you stay with the fear or anger, sort of play the movie forward, and when you are at a deeper level, intuit some sort of lesson from the emotions. I think better to say to yourself “That reminds me, I need to use the freeway for the safety and benefit of those around me today, and need to be mindful of my driving from now until I get where I am going”. Let the fear or anger dissipate as you focus of the things you can control – YOUR DRIVING! I believe the more you see how your failed attempts to control other people, places, and things is actually the cause of ALL your negative emotional states, the deeper your connection with God, and others. One must be other centered to have an effective relationship with God.

In other words, stay out of your own head – without adult supervision.